

12 January 2024

State Building Code Council

Re: Public Hearing Residential Code: Section 331 Family Home Child Care

Transcript of Public Testimony (to be presented via Zoom)

My name is Anjali Grant; I am a Seattle-based Architect with experience in family and center-based facilities.

There is an interactive map on a website called childcaredeserts.org, developed in part by a team of researchers at the University of Minnesota. The map leans red for scarcity of childcare relative to the number of children in the household, and blue for adequate supply. There is a slider on the map so that you can also look at poverty.

We do have pockets of blue in Washington state, where we have adequate supply of childcare – primarily in urban areas – although it varies neighborhood by neighborhood.

In our rural areas, there is a sea of red. Huge sections of the state have virtually no access.

In 2021, I did some feasibility work with a nonprofit in Ferry County, which is in the north central area of the state. This is a county with 7,000 people spread out over 2200 square miles and a 10% unemployment rate.

The nonprofit I worked with was trying to get funding for a new center; they were unsuccessful. At that time, there were two providers in the entire county, both of whom were family home care providers. I did a search for providers on the DCYF website this morning and found a single family home care provider within a 1000 mile radius of Republic, the largest city in Ferry County. Unfortunately, this provider has closed her doors.

Based on census data, there are 322 children under 5 years of age in Ferry County.

The proposed code changes would give local jurisdictions, such as the building and fire department of Ferry County, some additional tools to help their communities.

I live in an urban area with reasonably good access to childcare. As the breadwinner for my family, I needed that access for my own child, as did my mother for her children.

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I understand that spaces for children need to be safe, and as an Architect I defer to the lived experience and expertise of our Fire Marshals and fire-fighters. That said, I believe that there are circumstances where additional flexibility would give small, rural communities the ability to better serve their citizens.

Thank you very much to all the members of the Residential and Fire TAGs for your work on this proposed code change.

Sincerely,

Anjali Grant